

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIEV 000473

SIPDIS

NSC FOR DAMON WILSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: UKRAINE: EXTREME MAKEOVER FOR THE PARTY OF REGIONS?

REF: A. KIEV 408

[1](#)B. KIEV 400

Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) As part of an effort to transform itself its image into that of a democratic political force, Ukraine's Party of Regions -- long a haven for Donetsk-based mobsters and oligarchs -- is in the midst of an "extreme makeover." The effort enlists the help and advice of veteran K Street political tacticians. The fact that Ukraine's Human Rights Ombudsman, Nina Karpachova, is number two on the Region's list for the March parliamentary elections does not help; despite the title, the ombudsman gets failing grades from Ukraine's human rights community and, among other things, publicly defends the Castro regime. End summary.

Extreme Makeover

[1](#)2. (C) Enjoying a lead in the polls since the fall 2005 Orange team split, ex-PM Yanukovich's Party of Regions is working to change its image from that of a haven for mobsters into that of a legitimate political party. Tapping the deep pockets of Donetsk clan godfather Rinat Akhmetov, Regions has hired veteran K Street political help for its "extreme makeover" effort. According to the Internet news site Glavred.info, Davis, Manafort & Freedman is among the political consultants that have been hired to do the nipping and tucking.

We're Real People...Real Bad People

[1](#)3. (C) Ukraine's Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights (known as the Human Rights Ombudsman), Nina Karpachova, is number two on the party's list for the March elections. Karpachova's presence on the list does not help the attempted image makeover. Despite her title, Karpachova is a Soviet-style bureaucrat who has done little to promote human rights in Ukraine and, generally speaking, gets very poor marks from the country's human rights community. In December, the leaders of 18 of Ukraine's major human rights groups sent Karpachova an open letter, which was released to the media, calling on her to step down. The letter noted that her decision to run on the Region's ticket undermined the "independence and impartiality" of the Ombudsman's office.

Vintage Karpachova

[1](#)4. (SBU) Karpachova was in rare form during the Regions party congress in December. During a feisty speech, she declared that her lowest professional moment had come during the 2005 session of U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, where Ukraine's Orange government had instructed her to vote "against Cuba, a small island nation that has helped us." Pressed to explain that comment at a January 16 meeting with Ambassador, during which he passed her information about Cuba's dismal human rights record, Karpachova launched into a lengthy defense of the Castro regime, praising the dictator for, among other things, curbing illiteracy and running summer camps for Ukrainian children affected by the 1989 Chernobyl disaster. (Note: Karpachova neglected to mention that, while the summer camps are intended for children affected by Chernobyl, media reports established that during her watch the camps also hosted a number of children of Kuchma cronies.)

[1](#)5. (SBU) Karpachova even blamed Cuba's poor economic record on the U.S. embargo, which she advocated lifting. Ambassador expressed surprise that a representative of a party that purportedly believes in business would ignore the fact that the socialist policies of the Castro regime were the primary cause of Cuba's economic problems. She had no response.

[1](#)6. (U) Visit Embassy Kiev's classified website at:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kyev.

HERBST